

AVICC 2024

Report by Councillor Wehmeier

UBCM took place in Victoria from April 5th to April 7th 2024. The Gold River delegation consisted of Councillors Wehmeier, Pringle, and Pichert and CAO Roy.

Pre-Convention Forestry Tour

There was a tour of Western Forest Products seed orchard and nursery. Our tour guide was none other than Gold River's Paul Kutz, Manager of Silviculture.

Apologies for my bad notes. It was a rainy day and it reflected on my ability to read what I wrote, so hopefully these facts are accurate.

- At this nursery in Saanichton they grow roughly 3.2 million saplings a year all for reforesting by WFP.
- Normally there is a need to purchase seedlings from other sources as well to keep regeneration up with harvest, but that need has slowed due to markets, permitting, AAC reduction.
- Here they grow one year old seedlings, primarily four species: Douglas Fir, Sitka Spruce, Western Hemlock, and Western Red Cedar.
- We got to see what would become the 10 billionth tree to be planted since reforestation programs began in 1930. It was planted in Surrey's Green Timbers Urban Forest Park.

- The scale of their operation is huge, but is just the tip of the iceberg. 305 million seedlings were planted in BC forests last year.
- In the orchard they have been harvesting through best performance selection. This is not GMOs or anything terribly fancy, but choosing the seeds from the strongest trees. Doing this over generations has produced hardier, stronger, and bigger trees.
- Seeds from an orchard are Class A seeds. Wild seeds are Class B. Government obligations means that these orchard seeds are preferred for replanting. They also result in an average of about 20% more volume.



Speakers and Workshops

There were many speakers and workshops and I've jotted down the highlights.

- Minister of Municipal Anne Kang noted that BC is seeing its highest growth in 50 years and identified that this is an issue for municipalities. She highlighted the provincial governments help through the growing communities fund.
- Parliamentary Secretary for Rural Development Roly Russel spoke of the boom and bust diversity of our economies, and spoke about the REDIP program, which is both growing in available monies, but is still heavily oversubscribed. There will be a third intake from July - October 2024.
- Our keynote speaker was Diane Kalen Sukra. Much of her presentation was about the purpose of municipalities and the roles of civic leaders in addressing culture risk.
- There was a panel discussion on the TRC Calls to Action: A Roadmap to Right Relations. At the heart of this discussion seemed to be "we will have questions and uncertainties. The TRC Calls to Action provide a roadmap for us moving forward."
- Local leaders are looking to the province and UBCM for greater support including guidance.
- What we can do now is prioritise them in our OCP and Budget.
- UBCM President Trish Mandewo addressed a few pressing issues affecting municipalities in BC including awaiting the old growth action plan - a blended

approach to conservation and economy, as well as Bill-44, which would take away local decision making for population density.

Resolutions

Probably my favourite part of AVICC (and UBCM) has been the resolutions session. Here we get to decide priorities and asks we have of the province to affect positive change in our communities. Of note:

- Gold River had two resolutions, both of which passed and will be sent to UBCM.
- Councillor Wehmeier had put forward a resolution about having a separate assessment class for vacant residential properties.
- Councillor Pichert has put forward a resolution about funding for rural communities to support ageing-in-place.
- There were two resolutions that stood out to me as having great importance to Gold River and were hotly contested.
- R23 was sponsored by the City of Campbell River and was about halting the reductions to the Annual Allowable Cut. After the sponsor spoke in support there were three others at the con mic and none at the pro mic. I hadn't really planned on making a speech but nobody else was stepping up so I got up there and spoke about the degree to which the AAC has declined, quoted UBCM President Mandewo's words from earlier in the day, "when there is so much uncertainty, there is disinvestment" and noted the harm this has caused and will continue to cause communities dependent on forestry and TFLs.
- I should note that I was shaking, likely both from nerves and having to bend over so far to speak into the mic.
- This resolution was defeated by roughly a 60-40 vote. However it will hopefully have lit a spark in our northern communities to get together to better coordinate our actions.
- Lastly there was a resolution from the floor from Tahsis which I no longer have a copy of, but essentially read "Therefore be it resolved that AVICC and UBCM urge the provincial government to take in ocean fish farming out of the ocean." Again I got up to speak, but before I could it was referred to the AVICC executive, a suitable enough compromise.

Concurrent Workshops

There were two times of three concurrent workshops. Given we had three councillors we chose to wisely divide and conquer.

- I attended the Building Wildfire Resilience in Coastal Communities panel discussion. Highlights include:
- Vancouver Island doesn't live in the same fire regime as the rest of BC. The panel was somewhat optimistic that while the rest of BC is a more reactive state, Vancouver Island communities have the opportunity to be proactive with their fire fighting measures.
- Fire is obviously reemerging as a seasonal threat and it's not expected to get much better.
- Why is this a local government responsibility? All of us need to be a part of it. That includes community planning, improving local fire services. Behaviour changes at the local level.

- Firesmart is a new way to gather community members (ahem, SRD Firesmart meeting Thursday May 9th at 7 PM, it was in everybody's mailbox).
- Opportunity to have a regional wildfire committee.
- Kootenay-Nelson has a bylaw about planting conifers near buildings (you're not allowed).
- One of the most effective ways to save your house is to remove fuels from your house.
- This could be incorporated into the OCP.
- The other panel discussion was Energy, Energy, Energy by BCHydro and FortisBC.
- This was... much less useful. BCHydro is growing the grid, investing \$36 billion into its capital plan.
- The BC Hydro rep said about the rate structure, "Rate has become due." She was vague about when but we can stay tuned if we hate hitting second tier payments.
- There was mention that we could select a package (like internet or cable channels). I have no idea what that means.
- Of note from Fortis, they are looking into hydrogen as energy.

